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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQI GOVERNMENT, DECEMBER 15th ELECTION, TRANSPARENCY, SADDAM HUSSEIN TRIAL; BAGHDAD

SUMMARY: The major theme of today's editorials was the upcoming election and the secondary topic, in some papers was the Saddam Hussein trial.

Analysis: Independent As-Sabah's front-page editorial dealt with violations committed during the current electoral campaign. Though As-Sabah never specifically mentioned Allawi, the inference is that he has been a victim due to the widely reported news of his posters being defaced and torn down.

Independent Al-Mada highlighted Saddam's trial and expressed characteristic impatience and frustration with the pace and what Al-Mada sees as Saddam's pedestal for grandstanding.

Baghdad's front-page editorial entitled, "Glass Houses and Reality" by Abdul Jaleel Muhsin dealt with how the current Iraqi government pays little attention to assassinations and violations against the Iraqiya List and its members. The writer implores the government to "stop accusing the Iraqiya List and provide services for the people and complete honestly in the electoral process."

Al-Jaridah, affiliated with the Arab Socialist Movement, published a back-page editorial entitled, "Why We Are Voting for the Iraqiya National List 731." The editorial goes on to explain and summarize the list's political platform.

Al-Taakhi continues publishing editorials on page three supporting the Kurdish list 730. Al-Ittihad published a page-three editorial entitled the "Iraqi Democratic Scene Is A Result of Iraqis' Sacrifices" which dealt with competition among electoral lists. Another editorial on the same page, "The Upcoming Election and the New Future," encouraged Kurds to vote for the Kurdish Coalition, list 730.

Independent Al-Mashriq distributed a special free, eight-page electoral supplement, 'The Eyes of the Voter' along with its newspaper. The supplement contains articles about the upcoming election designed to educate the citizenry about the democratic process and encourage Iraqis to participate in the coming election.

Independent As-Sabah Al-Jadeed, also distributed a free electoral supplement simply called, 'The Election.' In addition to voter education material, the supplement contains interviews with candidates, broad discussion of the political scene in Iraq and an opinion poll on the last page. END SUMMARY.

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SELECTED COMMENTARIES

IA. "Turn the Page Please"
(Al-Mada - independent, no bias, published this back-page editorial by Amir Al-Qaisi)

"Let the families of the martyrs try him. That is what a seven-year old child said when she saw, on television, a young girl crying after her father was taken away by the Ba'athists. In fact, that child did not have any family members who were killed by the former regime but she expressed her real feelings saying, 'Why did Saddam kill all those people?' Who can save this child from her bewilderment and who can answer her questions?

"On the other hand, the adults lived and witnessed all details of that sadness and loss of our beloved people. We are still patient despite seeing the commander of defeat behind the bars but at the same time, we hope that he will be grateful to us for giving him a fair trial. Actually, we are not against giving that criminal a fair trial because we believe that in the new Iraq, suspects are innocent until they are proven guilty. However, we all know that Saddam is

a unique criminal.

"We understand the importance of establishing fair trials but we do not like to see Saddam use the trial to give political speeches, which we are sick of. This trial seems to be a badly managed melodrama that will cause others to mock the Iraqi people. More than one opinion poll showed that the Iraqi people do not like the continual extension of this play. Moreover, the second session did not receive widespread popular interest. We do not know why the suspect was addressed as 'Mr.' If all suspects were addressed as Mr. then how would we address [real] misters? In addition, Saddam's lawyers entered the court-root without wearing the official attire. The Iraqi people want this trial to be expedient-it's one that's costing us blood and tears. Frankly speaking, if this trial continues along the same path I will be the first one to call for the government to accede to strong popular demand, which is to turn the page, please."

1B. "Electoral Slogans"

(Al-Bayyan - affiliated with Ad-Dawa (led by Al-Ja'fari), no bias, published this page-five editorial by Salim Rasoul)

"There are a lot of electoral slogans displayed on walls of buildings all over the country. But, we should not be astonished because this is an electoral season. Most of these slogans are similar but there are some that make us really laugh.

"In order to make electoral slogans acceptable and convincing for people, these slogans must satisfy real popular needs. In addition, they must be credible. However, there are slogans that make Iraqis laugh because such slogans promise citizens that they will possess real estate and receive shares of oil. Such slogans disparage the minds of common Iraqis because everybody knows that the economic situation Iraq suffers from has many major problems; Iraq suffers from huge debts that were inherited by the deposed regime.

"In fact, we should not let our citizens think about day dreaming. Incredible electoral slogans may reduce the credibility of candidates. We think that such electoral slogans deceive people and we do not want politicians to be deceptive through their electoral platforms. Politicians cannot risk their political future by calling for ambitious slogans they know are impossible to achieve."

1C. "A Special Democracy"

(Ad-Dustoor - independent, no bias, published this page-three editorial by Bassim Al-Sheikh)

"The electoral competition among lists has reached a serious stage. Lists have started to exchange accusations among each other. In addition, there is a huge percentage of political liquidation among the electoral lists. I think we should solve this problem as soon as possible.

"The reasons behind these problems are a lack of awareness and education. In addition, the Iraqi mind lacks enlightenment about the meaning of disagreement of opinions. Many Iraqis still believe that disagreement of opinions means confiscation of opinions and this is one of the dictatorship's residuals. If we encouraged such philosophy in the new Iraq, there would be a fire that destroys everything because this fire is lurking beneath the ashes. Perhaps, those who conduct assassinations may justify their deeds saying that they were brought up with a negative education and during a dictatorial era, causing their personality to become aggressive.

"However, the most dangerous issue is that such assassinations were conducted with the blessings of political parties and foreign powers. These parties and powers support and provide protection for perpetrators of those assassinations. Therefore, such assassinations do not represent individual acts but rather represent the ideologies of political groups. At this point, these political parties are double-dealing. On one hand, they publicly denounce and reject violence while on the other, they support violence and perhaps plan and implement it in secret. These parties openly reject dictatorship but seek it

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clandestinely.

"These days, we find ourselves living in mini dictatorships that everybody is trying to establish; it seems that they do not understand the meaning of democracy yet. Democracy means that we should accept dissenting opinions as long as these opinions are lawful. If there are groups that believe in assassinations in order to control political life, how can we trust our future if they have a chance to run the government?"

